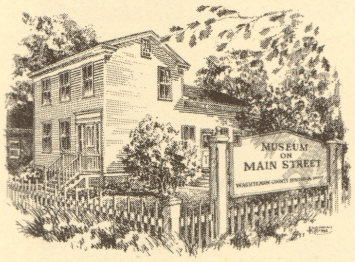
FEBRUARY 2008



IMPRESSIONS

WASHTENAW COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER • FOUNDED 1857

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Information
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From September-May.

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Web Site:
www.washtenawhistory.org

Annual dues: January-December individual, $15; couple/family $25; student or senior (60+) $10; senior couple $19; business/association $50; patron $100.

RICHARD L. GALANT, PhD

President's Letter

As the Washtenaw County Historical Society begins a new year in 2008, it will be working on two important goals throughout the year designed to sustain the organization as a "living historical" entity in Washtenaw County. First, WCHS has committed itself not only to provide the citizens of the county with exhibits and featured speakers that will teach and promote the rich history of Washtenaw County, but also it will seek new ways to improve the delivery of the county's "historical message." Secondly, as a compliment to the first goal, the Society will pursue more ways and methods to increase the size of its membership. Currently, the Society has a membership of almost 500 members, but it will seek to increase that number to sustain the vitality of the organization, especially among the young. Your help and support in helping WCHS reach these goals is always appreciated.

One WCHS membership benefit is the *Impressions* newsletter. Patti Smith does wonderful work in publishing our newsletter seven times annually. If you are interested in becoming an active contributor to *Impressions*, contact Patti at her email address, DrPattiS@comcast.net.

Other WCHS membership benefits are its public exhibits at the MoMS and speakers. The kitchens of our county, older and newer, will be the featured exhibit in February and March. Ms. Anita Toews will speak on "Ann Arbor Buildings and Architecture" on Sunday, February 17 at Cobblestone Farm Barn on Packard Road. This is a joint meeting of WCHS and the Cobblestone Farm Association. We hope to see you at these events.

WYSTAN STEVENS

Wystan Stevens' Tombstone Tour

On Sunday, November 18, 2007, historian Wystan Stevens spoke to a gathering of about fifty members and guests at the Ypsilanti District Library on Whittaker Road. Although we discovered that the library's meeting room cannot properly be darkened for midday slide shows, nevertheless "the show must go on," so Stevens gamely plowed ahead, sharing glimpses of 160 slides selected for the occasion.

Grave of a "Timber Estimater," in Forest Hill. It probably is not worth trying to calculate board feet in the tree-stump memorial of Archibald "Archie" Gilchrist, a disabled Civil War soldier who became a Muskegon sawmill foreman.

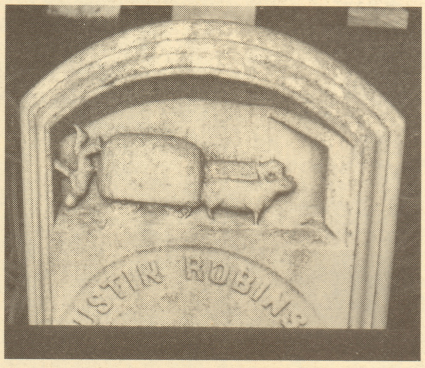
He led the audience on a tour of sculptural highlights of several graveyards in and near Washtenaw County, pointing out the typical and the unusual. The tour began with a few shots of Forest Hill Cemetery in Ann Arbor, the area's largest burying ground, where Stevens has conducted historical walking tours in every year since 1978. Some of the markers in Forest Hill have been moved there from other places, and a few actually predate the opening of the cemetery in 1859. (The first burial in Forest Hill was that of Benajah Ticknor, the U. S. Naval Surgeon whose home is now Cobblestone Farm.)

Another Ann Arbor cemetery, Fairview, contains a couple of dozen early slab tombstones that originally were in the old village Burying Ground, which became Felch Park, now the lawn beside the Power Center. In 1891, the mayor of Ann Arbor, Charles Manly, was burned in effigy by soreheads who opposed the city's decision to close the old graveyard, moving unclaimed bodies and headstones to Fairview, which is now the only municipally-operated burial place. By that time, most of the ancestral bones had already been moved to family plots in Forest Hill.

People

Fairview's early slab stones often have symbolic decorations, and are typical of the New England style. They mark the graves of some Ann Arbor pioneers. Among them are David Lord, Ann Arbor's first physician (who died tending the sick in a cholera epidemic), and lawyer and politician Zenas Nash "under a weeping willow."

Also in Fairview is Dr. Daniel Kellogg (1834-1876), identified by Stevens as a clairvoyant physician in Lower Town Ann Arbor, who had an office on Broadway. "He would go into a trance to diagnose his patients and it wasn't necessary for them to be present. All he needed was a letter



Austin Robinson was 25 in 1857, when he died in a fall from a hay wagon. The graphic depiction of his untimely end jars visitors to Lenawee County's Adrian Center Cemetery.

with the name and address and the ordinary fee — which quickly went up from fifty cents to a dollar. Then, he would prescribe medicines which he himself prepared. When he sensed that the patient was running low, he would prescribe more. I wonder if they ever got well?" (Kellogg's memoirs, published in 1869, now may be read online.)

Also in Fairview is an eagle-capped monument to soldiers from the Fifth Ward. "It was the first Civil War monument erected in Ann Arbor in 1874," reports Stevens. "That was forty years before the Washtenaw County monument was erected on the Courthouse lawn. The Courthouse's soldier later got exiled to Forest Hill."

A photo from Ann Arbor's Bethlehem Cemetery shows the monument to Daisy B. Davis, 16, a victim of the worldwide pandemic of Spanish Influenza that followed World War I. The monument is topped by a tree stump, symbolic of a life cut down before maturity, and a lamb, symbolic of the innocence of childhood as well as of the baby Jesus, "the lamb of

An unusual headstone photo in Bethlehem Cemetery preserves the youthful image of Daisy B. Davis, 16, who died in the great influenza pandemic of ninety years ago.

God that takest away the sins of the world." The monument also bears a photographic portrait of "Our Daisy" under glass — a rare feature for this area at that early date.

In Forest Hill, the monument to Johnnie Burg, 13, prominent near the entrance of the cemetery, is topped by a full figure of an angel.

Angel sculptures recognizably the work of the same artist may be seen in Fairview, St. John's Cemetery in Ypsilanti, and Riverside Cemetery in Clinton. Other stones have angels carved into them. Little angels are "practically a stock item for a child's grave," comments Stevens. (In a freak accident in 1887, Johnnie Burg, who had hoped to watch a circus train unload, instead was run over by it; his leg was crushed and he died from loss of blood.)

A delightful folk art angel, this is one of a group of similar stones in the graveyard of the Zion Lutheran Church of Chelsea, at Rogers Corners (Waters Road at Fletcher).

There are other well-known people buried in Forest Hill, including Orrin White, the first settler in Ann Arbor township in 1823, a year before John Allen and Elisha Walker Rumsey founded the city. Moved from the old burying ground, Rumsey's grave also is in Forest Hill, marked by a slab now flat on the ground. (Of the two settlers and their wives, Rumsey, who died in 1827, is the only one buried here. His stone was carved and signed by a stonecutter in Detroit.) Other graves of note include those of Ebenezer Wells, Ann Arbor's Civil War mayor; Friedrich Schmid, pioneer pastor to the Germans of Michigan; the Mack family, who ran the largest department store in Washtenaw County; University presidents Frieze, Angell, Hutchins, Burton, and Ruthven; U-M coaches Bo Schembechler and Fielding Yost.

Monuments

Stevens noted that urns are a common symbol in cemeteries. A variation on the urn is a birdbath, with one tombstone showing carved birds enjoying a bath and another showing a bird carrying a wreath.

Along with angels, lambs are sometimes found on children's graves. One child's grave in Ypsilanti's Highland Cemetery had the child's name on a lamb; another had a boy's pet dog depicted on it.

Other forms of monuments include classical columns, arches (to signify the completion of life), a farewell handshake, hands pointed upward, hands holding links in a chain (representing the broken chain of life), hands pointing to scrolls, and hands holding open Bibles. (A carved Bible in the German cemetery at Rogers Corners is inscribed "Heilige Bibel.") Stevens showed several examples of each form of iconography. One post-Civil War carved hand, in the Judd Cemetery south of Saline, points not heavenward but back toward Saline, as if existence in that happy hamlet might prove an equivalent substitute for a heavenly reward.

The grip may be stiff and weak, but this deeply-carved example from Rogers Corners is typical of the 19th-century "farewell handshake" motif.

What peculiar whimsy inspired the carver of this stone in the Judd Cemetery to show us a hand (with truncated index finger) pointing the way to Saline?

Tree stump and tree trunk monuments appear in almost every cemetery. Metallic monuments of so-called "white bronze" were another 19th-century fad. The most unusual headstones are those for two German lads — Johann Georg Müller, in Forest Hill, and Johan Martin Hahn,

In Forest Hill, a tree-stump memorial has had its "bark" stripped away to reveal the name of pioneer settler George Corselius, who left Ann Arbor in 1859 for the California Gold Rush, but died *en route* and was buried at sea.

in Bethlehem — both carved by the same stonecutter, each bearing a pictorial depiction of the death of the deceased. Müller died in 1858, crushed by a fallen log at his sawmill on Packard at Hill Street. The picture on the stone shows him under the log as it is dragged 80 rods by a team of horses. Hahn, in 1860, was working alone on a Scio Township farm when a team of runaways knocked him down with a heavy farm wagon they had in tow. The stone shows him being run over by a wagon wheel as the horses romp away in a frenzy.

Junius Beal, longtime regent of the U-M, is buried under a book — perhaps a copy of the memorial edition of Dr. Chase's Recipes, the phenomenal bestseller of the 19th century that laid the foundation of the Beal family's fortune. Another heavy tome rests on the grave of Eleazar Darrow, M.A., professor of Latin and Greek — no doubt symbolic of the great weight of his learning pressing down on him throughout eternity. The Webb family is buried under a pyramid of modest dimensions.

In 1858, sawmill owner Johann Georg Müller was crushed by a fallen log. This headstone, now in Forest Hill Cemetery, shows his death agony. It may be the oldest pictorial depiction of a news event in the history of Ann Arbor.

The 1860 stone for Scio Township farm worker Johan Martin Hahn, in Bethlehem Cemetery, portrays his ghastly end: knocked down and dragged under a heavy farm wagon, which was pulled by frenzied runaway horses.

Stones

Some stones record where the deceased was originally from; others have plaques that read "perpetual care." Interestingly, reports Stevens, an inscription on a mammoth granite monument in Tecumseh reads "perpetual care for 400 years." Stevens gloats: "Now we know when perpetuity ends!"

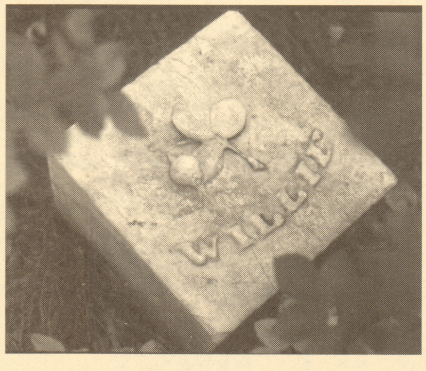
When U-M Regent Junius Emery Beal died in 1942, the former newspaper owner and book publisher was buried in Forest Hill Cemetery, underneath a book.

Some stones are broken, weathered or vandalized. "Some damage is from weathering." Stevens says: "the frozen-ground-swell that Robert Frost wrote of, 'that spills the upper boulders in the sun.' But some of it is deliberate, cruel vandalism — reckless, thoughtless, heedless. Like books and photographs and the buildings on our streets, the stones in the cemeteries are artifacts of local history, part of the record available to us as we try to form a mental picture of the past. To destroy one is to erase its information and its symbols — its loss is like a page torn from the great record book of human existence in this place."

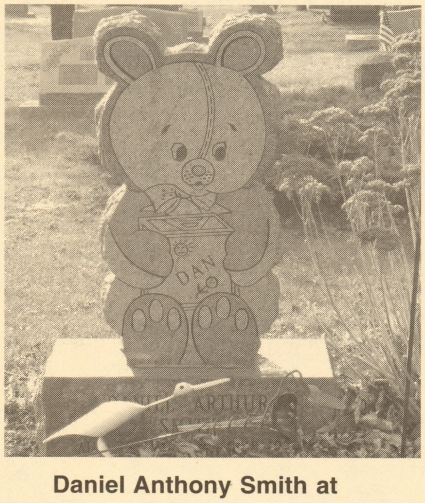
[Stevens' pages on Flickr, the photo-sharing website, include information on the deaths of Johann Georg Müller, Johan Martin Hahn, and an Adrian man named Robinson, whose manner of death also was depicted on his stone.]

"Their Deaths Were Carved In Stone": http://www.flickr.com/photos/70251312@N00/sets/72157602641855527/

The remains of Reuben Kempf the banker (uncle of Reuben Kempf the musician) are preserved in this Greek Revival mausoleum in Forest Hill. Also inside is his wife, Susannah, who was one of the first women in Ann Arbor to drive an automobile — and notorious for her slow driving.



Little "Willie" — nipped in the bud — was a tiny baby, Wilhemina Molony Olmstead, who lived for only one month, in 1878. This stone is in Forest Hill Cemetery.



Daniel Anthony Smith at Bethlehem Cemetery.

COMPILED BY ALICE CERNIGLIA

Leap Year Traditions

Leap Year has been the traditional time that women can propose marriage. In many of today's cultures, it is okay for a woman to propose marriage to a man; however, that hasn't always been the case. When the rules of courtship were stricter, women were only allowed to pop the question on one day every four years. That day was February 29th.

It is believed this tradition was started in 5th century Ireland when St. Bridget complained to St. Patrick about women having to wait for so long for a man to propose. According to legend, St. Patrick said the yearning females could propose on this one day in February during the leap year.

The first documentation of this practice dates back to 1288, when Scotland passed a law that allowed women to propose marriage to the man of their choice in that year. They also made it law that any man who declined a proposal in a leap year must pay a fine. The fine could range from a kiss to payment for a silk dress or a pair of gloves.

In the United States, some people have referred to this date as Sadie Hawkins Day with women being given the right to run after unmarried men to propose. Sadie Hawkins was a female character in the Al Capp cartoon strip *Li'l Abner*. Many communities prefer to celebrate Sadie Hawkins Day in November which is when Al Capp first mentioned Sadie Hawkins Day.

There is a Greek superstition that claims couples have bad luck if they marry during a leap year. Apparently one in five engaged couples in Greece will avoid planning their wedding during a leap year.

Source: Wikipedia

Volunteer Opportunities

Numerous volunteer opportunities are available. If you are interested in getting involved with our historical society, please call 662-9092 and ask for Alice.

Wanted

Early kitchen gadgets, appliances, pictures etc. that you might have around the house for the next exhibit, "The Kitchen 1830-1950." The exhibit will run from March 5 through June 11.

If you would be willing to loan them to us, please contact Alice Cerniglia by phone at 737-662-9092 or by email at wchs-500@ameritech.net.

COMPILED BY ALICE CERNIGLIA

Valentine's Day in Washtenaw County

The association of St. Valentine's Day with romantic love dates at least to Geoffrey Chaucer's *Parlement of Foules* (1382), although it may extend as far back as the festivals of fertility and love that the Greco-Romans celebrated in the month of February. The exchange of mass-produced valentine cards began in the US in the mid-1800s. Beginning in the early 1900s, residents of Washtenaw County celebrated the holiday enthusiastically, as we see from the following items appeared in *The Ypsilantian*, on February 16, 1911:

"The **'I'll Try'** class of the Methodist Sunday school gave a Valentine Social in the Epworth League room Monday evening. Valentine games furnished the amusement of the evening. Ice cream and wafers were served during the evening. About 30 were present."

"A particularly pretty Valentine party was given Tuesday evening by Harold Kilian and Bert Wilcox at the Maccabee Hall. About 20 couples were present. The music was furnished by Leo Witmire and Lou Kilian. The parlors were artistically decorated with hearts and cupids in red and white while in the hall the walls were covered with dainty valentines with one large heart suspended in the center of the north and about which were grouped little lights with red bulbs. Festoons of the red and white paper were also used effectively in the decorations. A screen of palms and ferns partially obscured the musicians and were also used in the cosy (sic) corner, which was attractively arranged with pillows and screens."

"Miss Louise Allen gave a Valentine luncheon of four courses Tuesday at her home on Hamilton Street, at which twelve covers were laid. Diminutive red hearts were the place cards, while valentines of sunbonnet babies, standing perkily upright at each place were the tasteful favors...."

Happy Valentine's Day from everyone at the Washtenaw County Historical Society!

Around the Town

The Cobblestone Farm Association is pleased to announce an **Old Fashioned Barn Dance** to be held in the reconstructed barn at Cobblestone Farm. This traditional entertainment event, in years past known as a Cotillion, later a Quadrille, and finally a Square Dance, will be held on **Saturday, February 23, 2008,** from 8-11:30 pm.

The Cobblestone Farm house museum will be open for tours from 5-8 pm. Tickets for this living history event are $7 at the door. No age limits, no experience required. Sandwiches and non-alcoholic beverages will be available for purchase at 10 pm.

Ann Arbor's own David Park Williams will appear as an authentic 19th century dance teacher. Fiddler Donna Baird, pianist David West, and bassist Mark Williams will play rollicking period music. An easy grand march, mixers, and squares will appeal to beginners; seasoned dancers will want to help newcomers enter easily into America's rich dance heritage. After intermission, experienced dancers may demonstrate and teach others the polka, waltz, gallop or schottische.

Cobblestone Farm Museum is located at 2781 Packard Rd., Ann Arbor. 734/994-2928.

Kempf House Museum, 312 S. Division St., Ann Arbor, MI 48104. (734) 994-4894. www.kempfhouse.museum.org

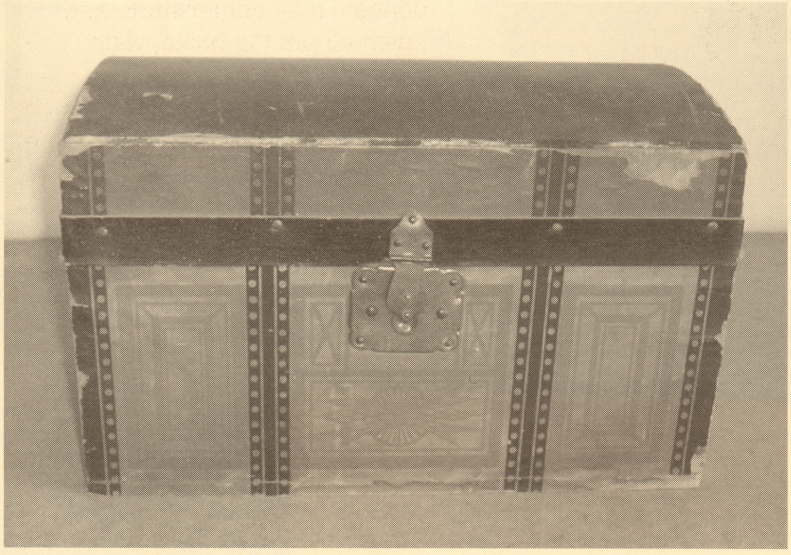
The Kempf House Museum's annual Victorian Valentine Teas will be held Saturday, February 9 and Sunday, February 10, with seatings at 1:30 and 3:30 PM. This is an elegant, traditional tea, served from the Museum's antique silver service. The menu includes both sweets and savouries. Period attire is welcomed. This popular fundraiser usually sells out in advance. $20 per person. For reservations call 994-4898, Kempf House Museum, 312 South Division Street.

Around the County

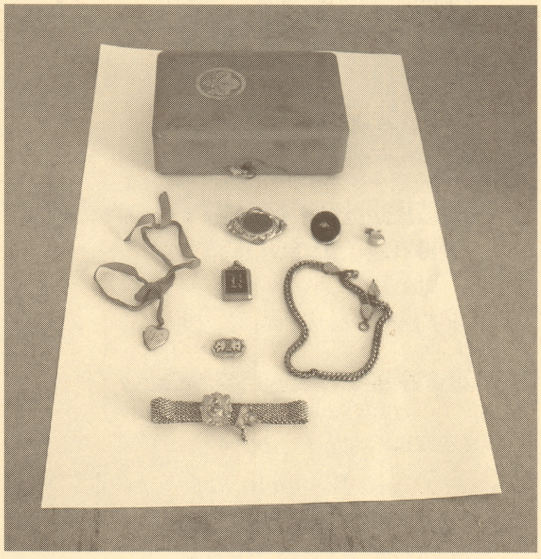
The Salem Area Historical Society announces its annual dinner/auction on **Saturday, February 16, 2008 at 6pm** at the Fox Hills Club House in Salem. Please see their website, http:/sahshistory.org/, for more details.

The Salem Area Historical Society also will be having a fundraiser at the Compuware Arena on **Friday, February 22 at 7:05pm**. Please see their website, http://sahshistory.org/, for more details and to order tickets.

New Treasures



Small Tuomy trunk.



Tuomy jewelery.

The first 2008 donation of artifacts came from the Historical Society of Michigan. The Tuomy House on Washtenaw Avenue, Ann Arbor, has been sold and the Society has moved all of its operations to East Lansing.

Larry Wagenaar offered to transfer ownership of 15 boxes of Tuomy papers, artifacts and photographs as well as all of the portraits and other pictures previously hung in the Tuomy house. The Washtenaw County Historical Society board readily accepted this offer and curator, Judy Chrisman, is now sorting through the boxes and finding many treasures.

Some of the findings so far include: and envelope of greeting cards, a large envelope of brass and bronze medals including many from American Legion conventions held all over the country. Also found are a small red box containing jewelry, a cow bell, sleigh bells, many family snap shots and a small wooden trunk covered with lithographed paper. This is only the beginning – there are many more treasures awaiting discovery.

Some of C. W. Tuomy's badges and medals.

Tuomy greeting cards.

MUSEUM ON MAIN STREET
A Museum Of County Life

WASHTENAW COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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SUNDAY • 2 PM
FEBRUARY 17, 2008

"ANN ARBOR BUILDINGS AND ARCHITECTURE"

SPEAKER • ANITA TOEWS

COBBLESTONE FARM BARN
2781 PACKARD • ANN ARBOR, MI

This is a joint meeting with the Cobblestone Farm Association.
INFORMATION • 734.662.9092

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Program Schedule 2008

Sunday, February 17, 2008 • 2 pm
ANN ARBOR BUILDINGS AND ARCHITECTURE
Speaker: *Anita Toews*
Location: Cobblestone Farm Barn, 2781 Packard, AA

Sunday, March 16 • 2 pm
WORKING WOMEN'S HISTORY—PRIOR TO 1918
Speaker: *Susan Nenadic*
Location: Ann Arbor District Library 343 S. Fifth Avenue, AA

Sunday, April 20 • 2 pm
RESTORATION OF ST. HELENA LIGHTHOUSE WITH SCOUT TROOP 4
Speaker: *Dick Moehl*
Location: Glacier Hills Retirement Community 1200 Earhart Road, AA

May 2008
WCHS ANNUAL MEETING
Potluck supper & election of officers.
Date & location to be determined

Mission Statement

The purpose of the Washtenaw County Historical Society is to foster interest in and to elucidate the history of Washtenaw County from the time of the original inhabitants to the present. Its mission shall be to carry out the mandate as stated through the preservation and presentation of artifacts and information by exhibit, assembly, and publication. And to teach, especially our youth, the facts, value and the uses of Washtenaw County history through exhibits in museums and classrooms, classes, tours to historical places, and other educational activities.